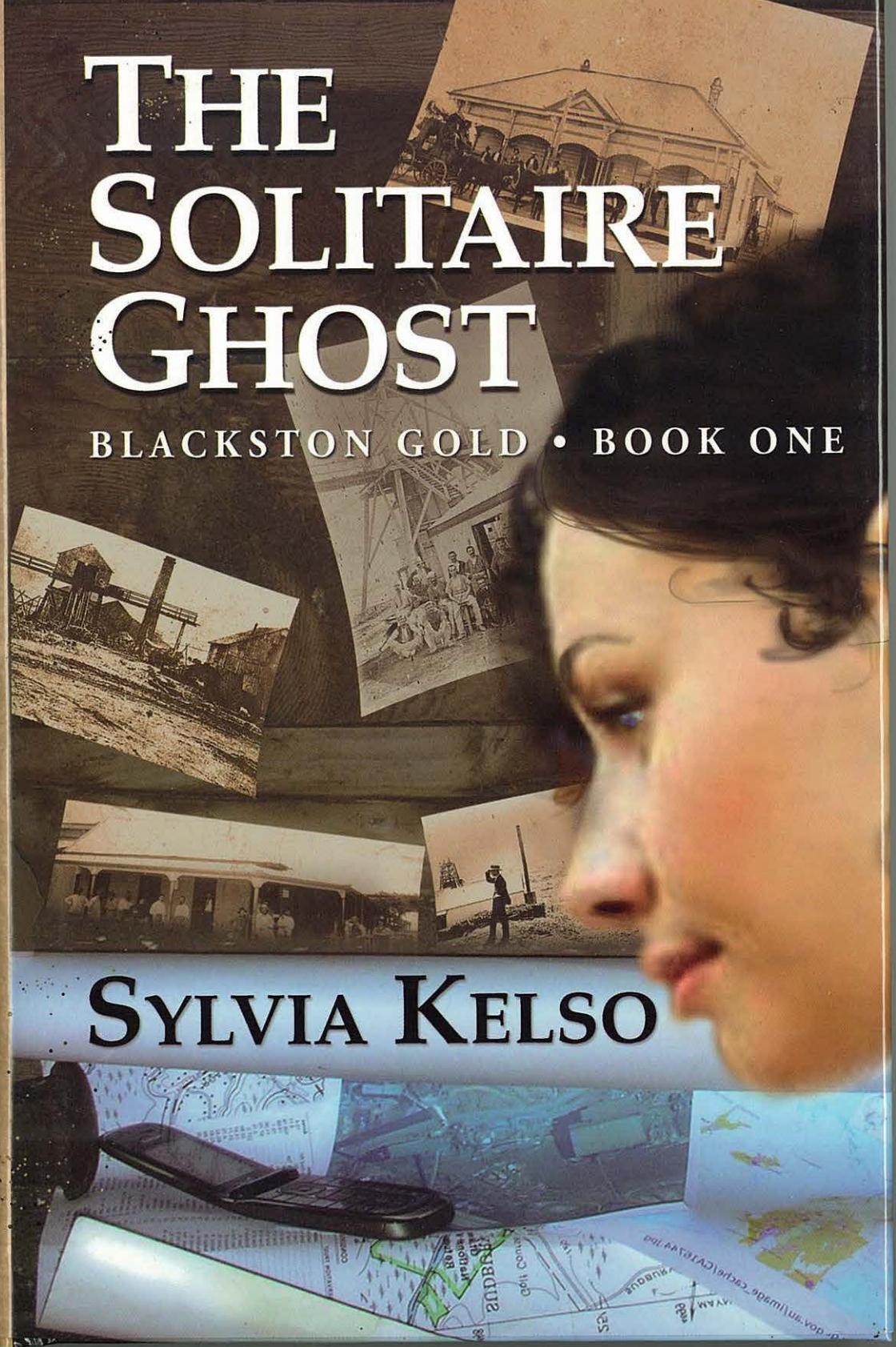


# THE SOLITAIRE GHOST

BLACKSTON GOLD • BOOK ONE

SYLVIA KELSO



Dorian Wild has a car, a good apartment, a junior partnership in a law firm, and a solid relationship. Then a seeming ghost walks out of an elevator floor and rebalances a miner's panning dish on top of her head.

Suddenly Dorian Wild also has danger, tragedy, mystery, break-ins, mayhem, an unscrupulous megacorp on her trail, and a whole new concept of reality. Especially when it involves a nineteenth-century Irish activist called Jimmy Keenighan, who has ended up in her time and place for reasons neither of them understands. Except that the whole tangle of gold-mines old and new, dangers past and present, time-shifts, deceit and violence, centers on the town of Blackston, with its once rich and still potential goldfields, and the great mine called the Solitaire. Perhaps, somewhere among the mysteries, there may be another ghost: a shadow, a question, a possibility called Solitaire Two.

*The Solitaire Ghost* is a fast-moving combination of suspense and time-romance, played out in an Australian setting. The story knits together the historic past and the twenty-first century present, and discovers many common elements, especially around the ever-disturbing presence of gold.







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FIVE STAR

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For the yarn-spinners in my family,  
particularly my grandfather, father  
and my uncle Arthur (Windy)  
who passed on some of the stories here.



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And Mike Rubenach, for a wealth of data on geology, geologists and gold mines, but most for telling me the yarn that became the center of Chris's story and the trigger for this book.



## CHAPTER I

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Dorian hurried into the elevator and juggled a trio of lunch bags to reach the button for Lewis and Cotton's eighth-story office. As she hitched her latest barrister's brief up under the other arm, the ghost walked out of the floor.

Afterwards, she remembered that he was tall: when their feet came level, her eyes were opposite his collarbones. Or at least, the collar of his shirt. But he was still hip-deep in the floor when the beard grabbed her eye.

It started at his ears and met above his lips, it fanned over his shoulders and reached halfway down his chest, straight at the ends, curling round his mouth. It belonged in some picture of a Victorian patriarch, but it was dark, the rich bronzed dark of red-cedar wood. A young man's beard, live and thick as a bush.

The hair was probably the same, under the stained and bent-brimmed apology of a hat. Straw, maybe, pale and ropy, flopping down from a high conical peak. Not an Akubra, she realized as it came past her face, not a felt hat at all. Nor was the shirt an ordinary plumber or stockman's working clothes. The sleeves were rolled, but the material was creased like canvas, blue with a broad vertical stripe, and a low round collar like something from a cowboy film.

The braces, too, she remembered afterwards. And the cut of the trousers, nothing like Levis, thick dark stuff whose waistband nearly touched his ribs, clumsy as the boots, hampering as the tools he clutched.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**Sylvia Kelso** lives in North Queensland, Australia, and has been writing or telling stories for as long as she remembers. She has previously published three fantasy novels with Five Star: the well-received *Everran's Bane*, its sequel, *The Moving Water*, which was a finalist for an Australian Aurealis genre fiction award, and *The Red Country*. The follow-up to *The Solitaire Ghost*, *The Time Seam*, will appear in October 2011.

Sylvia Kelso lives in a house with a lot of trees, but no cats or dogs. She makes up for this by playing Celtic music on a penny whistle, and is learning the fiddle as well.





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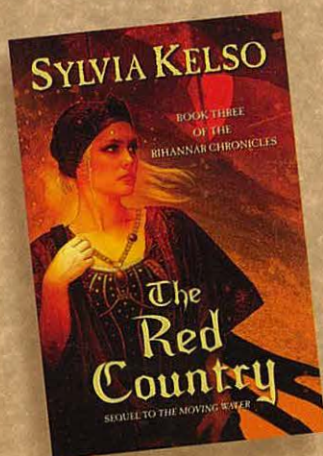
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## Advance praise for Sylvia Kelso's *The Solitaire Ghost*:

"*The Solitaire Ghost* gripped me from the first page to the last. What joy to find a book where everyone is whip-smart, heroes and villains alike. Vivid atmosphere, depth of feeling, and a cracking fast pace made this almost impossible to put down."

—Caroline Stevermer, co-author of *Sorcery and Cecilia*



## Praise for *The Red Country*:

"... a lovely book."

—SF Crowsnest

## Praise for *Everran's Bane*:

"The prose is dense and chewy, the world building complex and colorful, and plotting kept me turning pages till four in the morning . . . not without sly humor . . . as well as heartbreak and heroism. Highly recommended."

—Lois McMaster Bujold, author of *Nebula*  
and Hugo-winning *Paladin of Souls*

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